

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PN
SUBJECT: TREATY RELATED, THE PLEBISCITE CAMPAIGN

1. NEWSPAPERS ARE FULL OF TREATY SIGNING AND PLEBISCITE-RELATED NEWS. SIGNS OF THE PRO-TREATY STEAMROLLER CAN BE READ IN THE HEADLINES: "IN SAN MIGUELITO (TOWN) 5000 SUPPORT NEW TREATY"; "MUNICIPAL WORKERS ARE WITH THE TREATY"; "LAWYERS OF CHIRIQUI (PROVINCE) SUPPORT TREATY'S APPROVAL AND RATIFICATION"; "EDUCATORS UNITE IN AGREEMENT WITH TREATY"; "PARENTS FEDERATION SUPPORT NEW CANAL TREATY"; "INDIGENOUS PEOPLE (SAN BLAS INDIANS) FOR NEW TREATY"; "LOCALS 900 AND 907 (AFL/CIO UNIONS REPRESENTING PANAMANIAN-CITIZEN EMPLOYEES OF PANAMA CANAL CO. AND U.S. MILITARY IN CANAL ZONE) REITERATE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF TREATY"; "LAWYERS (MOVEMENT OF LAWYERS FOR SOVEREIGNTY) FOR THE TREATY"; "THE INTERIOR (AREAS OUTSIDE PANAMA PROVINCE) HAS FAITH IN THE NEW TREATY"; GRADUATES OF 64 (YEAR OF CANAL ZONE RIOTS) ARE WITH NEW TREATY"; "NURSES EXPRESS THEIR SUPPORT (FOR TREATY)"; AND SO ON AND SO ON. ORGANIZATIONS HURRY TO ISSUE DECLARATIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE TREATY WHICH ARE THEN GIVEN PRESS PLAY. "POLITICAL COMMITTEE (OR GROUP) OF ERSa" (EDITORIA RENOVACION S.A., HOLDING COMPANY FOR GOP-CONTROLLED MEDIA) APPEARS TO BE RUNNING THE

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PRESS CAMPAIGN AND SIGNS OFF UNDER TORRIJOS QUOTES LIKE "I DON'T WANT TO GO DOWN IN HISTORY, I WANT TO ENTER THE ZONE. OMAR."

2. PANAMA'S VICE PRESIDENT GERARDO GONZALEZ IS THE GOVERNMENT'S BUSIEST PRO-TREATY HUCKSTER. "WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE PEOPLE WILL VOTE 'YES' ON THE TREATY,"

HE IS QUOTED IN A NEWS REPORT. GONZALEZ IS ALSO COORDINATOR OF THE "WELCOME HOME OMAR" RALLY SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9. NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT GROUPS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WILL COME TO THE EVENT.

3. PROCESS OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE TREATY GOES ON WITH DAILY REPORTS OF GOP SPOKESMEN MEETING WITH VARIOUS GROUPS TO EXPLAIN THE DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT.

4. COMMENT: LIKE VICE PRESIDENT GONZALEZ, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE PLEBISCITE VOTE WILL BE "YES". THE GOP IS MOUNTING A CONCENTRATED PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TO ASSURE SUCH A RESULT. MEDIA HAVE BEEN ALLOWING TREATY OPPOSITION GROUPS SPACE TO PRESENT THEIR OBJECTIONS, BUT THESE HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW SO FAR. THE OPPOSITION OF A FEW PANAMANIAN LIVING IN MIAMI HAS BEEN REPORTED IN RECENT DAYS, BUT THIS HAS LED SOME OF THE MEDIA AND OTHERS (E.G., AN ORGANIZATION OF EMPLOYEES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION) TO BRAND SUCH DISSENTERS AS "TRAITORS".
GONZALEZ

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